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October 3, 2011

FANO Founder Dies at 81

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Florida Association of Nonprofit Organizations

The Heart of the Florida Nonprofit Community

Born with a Gift:

In the middle of the Great Depression, Russell Hugh John Marchner (Russ) was born, Saturday, March 8, 1930, to George John and Lucy Juliana Memmel Marchner in Irondequoit, NY, a suburb of Rochester. Always precocious, Russ learned the value of music, sports and school at an early age. As a musician he was appointed as Marching Band Major, First trumpet in the High School Band, Lead in the regional traveling minstrel show trio and a member of the University Band. As a baseball player and avid fan, Major League scores were a daily staple for 70 plus years starting at age 4 when his Uncle Rudy taught him to play. Russ led his high school and was elected class vice president and edited the school newspaper. He was educated by the Jesuits at John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio, where he also managed football ticket sales; at the same time student Don Shula, future NFL Hall of Fame coach, was a defensive back. In 1955 Russ earned a masters degree from New York's Columbia University School of Journalism, preparing him for his dream career as a sports reporter; instead however, he played "tackle football" with local politicians. His newspaper stories integrated the beaches of Florida, jailed a crooked sheriff and "suspect" State Attorney and shook up accounting procedures at City Hall. In Russ's own words, "I must have done a good job because I was sued twice for libel and beat both of them."

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War and Justice:

The Korean War was what set the stage for Russ's journalism career. After basic training, he served in the Army's prestigious CIC (Counter Intelligence Corps processor of the CIA) in a top security post performing special duties and espionage-type assignments. That training served him well as a reporter Russ managed to be "in the middle of all the action" at the: Wall Street Journal, Plainfield (NJ) Courier News, Cleveland Plain Dealer, and the Palm Beach County bureau and later city desk of the Miami Herald.

While in the 2 person bureau of Palm Beach County, also dubbed by many as "the Wild West of the South", Russ was "center stage" in the courtroom of Florida Judge Curtis Chillingworth, on the day the judge failed to show up. As a rookie reporter Russ was on the scene covering this nationally publicized manhunt starting from the Judge's Manalapan home, where it was first discovered that Judge and his wife Marjorie were dragged into the sea. The bodies were never found but four-years later three culprits including Judge Peal were sent to prison. Then at a time when segregation was still the norm at most beaches, Russ wrote a story and quoted a County Commissioner announcing the Palm Beach beaches were "NOT segregated". Russ was center stage again for the "black versus white standoff" on the beach the next day. It was during this time that Russ began a lifelong friendship with fellow activist and young civil rights attorney Claude Pepper, who later became Senator and US Representative.

Finally, while covering the city beat in North Miami Beach, Russ wrote a series of investigative reports which resulted in jail time for the local solicitor and earned Russ a well-deserved Pulitzer Prize nomination; supported city editor Al Neuharth founder USA Today and managing editor George H. Beebe who hired Russ when he knocked on his private Waldorf Astoria Hotel room and brazenly applied for a job.

Final Curtain:

Russ Marchner is succeeded by his wife of 20 years Marina Pavlov; his 8 children: Carol Ann Westmoreland, (Jim) Tallahassee; Robert John (Jane) Port Arthur TX; Laura Jean Marchner Tallahassee, FL; Kim Louise McMahan (John) Atlanta, GA, Todd Gregory Marchner, LaJolla; Darren George Marchner, Glendale, AZ; Annamarie "Amy" Young (Michael) Key Largo, FL; Harris Christopher "Harry" Moyer (Ingrid), Plantation, FL; and grandchildren Sergio Barrios 19; Samantha Jane Marchner 13; Harris Mason Moyer 12; Sophia Elizabeth Marchner 6; 2 brothers: Andre Pavlov (Kakie Pope and 3 children Nicholas, Julia and Sophia) Tallahassee; Michael Pavlov (Arikka and 4 children Hillary, Joseph, Karina and Kristina) Kingston, NY; and three sisters Tanya Picone (Joe) Fort Lauderdale; Natalie Duerkopp (Karl and 5 children Melanie, Stephanie, Christopher, Justin and Joshua) Seattle, WA; Katrina Arnhold (son Phillip (Mary and 2 children Michelle and Christopher) Herndon, VA; and as well as a niece Barbara Baldeck (Jerry) York, PA and nephew Jim Winterroth (Martha Ann) of Land O'Lakes, FL and two grand-dogs Floyd and Ellie May of Key Largo.

Legacy of the Heart:

Underlying all of Russ's success was his generosity, good will and sense of community. As a young humanitarian Russ worked with his like-minded father in the apple-drying business to feed the hungry in Germany during the European depression. He organized and founded: Gold Coast League of Cities, Municipal Tourism Crime Task Force, Local Government Hurricane Andrew Emergency Response, Earthquake Relieve in Managua, and the Florida Association of Nonprofit Organizations (FANO now serves 54,000 nonprofits in Florida). Under his leadership and grassroots lobbying a joint resolution of the 1991 Nonprofit Bill of Rights and 2001's restructured qualification of Nonprofit Sales Tax Exemption was achieved. He also serve as Chairman of both Keep Dade Beautiful and the Hialeah YMCA.

To honor his public service contributions he was awarded: National League of Cities Don Stutz Municipal Government Employee of the Year Award, Art Guild Volunteer of the Year Award, Bill Held Tribute for Government Service, Florida League of Cities Resolution Recognition of Service, 911 Starter Award for founding the widely used emergency system, DOT Appreciation for I-95 Completion, Census 2010 Appreciation, North Miami appreciation for legislation mandating equitable treatment of Haitian immigrants, and Generous Contributions to Summit of the Americas from President Bill Clinton. Russ was also presented with the key to the Cities of North Miami, North Bay Village and Hialeah.

In 2004, The Russ Marchner Outstanding Municipal Official Service Award was created. Subsequently, the Russ Marchner Award has been presented to seven honorees whose work carries on his legacy. Russ had a personal relationship with 8 Florida Governors and thousands of local government officials which established his reputation as the father of local government in Miami-Dade County.

Memorial:

In keeping with his love of life and his ever-present sense of humor, a New Orleans-style memorial service to celebrate the life of Russ Marchner will be held at 2pm on
Sunday, October 23, 2011

In the Alhambra Ballroom at the Biltmore Hotel, 1200 Anastasia, Coral Gables 33134.

Please call 954.522.0477 for more information.

In lieu of flowers the family requests that donations be made to the Russ Marchner Education Foundation, 1511 South Ocean Drive, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316.